

Laurance J. Splitter

Questioning the “Citizenship Industry”¹

I argue that *citizenship* and related concepts should be treated warily by educators and researchers. Citizenship cannot define who *I am*, nor can it plausibly ground moral or values education. For both these tasks, the relational concept of *being a person in the world* does a better, and simpler, job. I suggest that classrooms which take the concept of personhood seriously should function as *inquiring communities*, in which such issues as the meaning and importance of our affiliations and associations may be critically examined. There may be good reasons for the recent expansion of what I term “the citizenship industry” in educational research, but they should not be taken for granted, particularly given that the concept of *citizenship* is often used by governments around the world to support strongly nationalistic policies which are inimical to genuine inquiry and autonomy.

Keywords:

Citizenship, Identity, Moral Education, Personhood, Relationships, Community of Inquiry, Values.

At least one reliable source has reported that studies on Civics and/or Citizenship Education have *tripled* in number since 2001.² However, I am not convinced that such increased attention is warranted. Indeed, in this paper, I want to call into question the viability of the concept of *citizenship education*, particularly in the context of two areas which are of considerable contemporary interest: identity formation – both individual and socio-political – and moral education. I suggest that issues of identity and morality are better understood within a framework of ordinary *personhood* and, moreover, that working within this framework places the onus on those who would argue for citizenship (as with religious) education – whether of the nationalistic, tribal or global variety – to demonstrate that their goals are both educationally worthwhile and consistent with the development of young people *as persons* in what I am calling the “ordinary” sense, to be outlined below.

1. Citizenship is central to our sense of identity: who we are (who I am) (??)

The singular and plural versions of the questions of identity noted in this heading are not mere grammatical variants; and while references to citizenship *may* conceivably provide answers to “Who are we?”, they do *not* suffice for the singular version: “Who am I?” In this respect, the concept of citizenship – and more

specific instances such as *Chinese, American, British, citizen* etc. – are akin to other such parochial concepts as *religion, ethnicity, language, community* – along with their respective instances. The point here is basically a semantic one: the verb “to be” (in English) is radically ambiguous. In saying that I *am* (an) Australian citizen, I am *predicating* the property of being Australian of myself. At best, this is a case of *identification* not strict identity, because (i) this property is only one among many that apply to me, and (ii) the same property applies to others as well (viz. all Australian citizens; however this is defined). By contrast, if I declare that I am Laurance Splitter (in a situation where someone is either asking for me in a crowded room, or seeking to know my name), then I am, indeed, declaring myself to be *identical to/with* that person (in the same sense that 2+3 is identical with 5).

The distinction in question is conceptual. If an individual P identifies himself as a member of a class or group G, then P and G are two conceptually distinct entities here, each with its own identity conditions or criteria. We need, then, to specify such conditions for both P and G. Notice that the identity conditions for individual persons must allow for several possibilities, including: my identification with others who are also persons (i.e. belonging to the same class or kind), my distinctness from non persons, *and my distinctness from others who are also persons*. By contrast, identity conditions for G are given more simply by such statements as the following: “For x to be a member of G requires that x...”. For example, “For a person x to be an Australian citizen, x must either have been born in Australia or been naturalized”; “To be a Jew is (in strict orthodox terms) to be born of a Jewish mother or to have been converted according to Jewish law”; etc.

It is appropriate for me to identify with other Australian citizens, other Jews, etc., provided that (i) I do not see these affiliations as defining or prescribing the *very person* that I am; (ii) one kind of affiliation or self-identification does not exclude others; (iii) there will be other individuals, some of whom will also identify with these groups, while others will not; and (iv) I – or relevant others – see some point or purpose in so identifying.

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2 The search engine: *Education Research Complete* reports that in the period 2001-2010, the number of journal articles with titles containing “citizenship” was 1194, up from 234 a decade earlier. The corresponding figures for the term “civic” were 813 and 166. The search engine *ERIC* reports somewhat more modest figures, but also shows a sharp increase.



Citizenship is a "collectivist" concept. It is one manifestation of our propensity to gather together, or associate, with others. Collectivism, in its most extreme forms (which Nel Noddings calls 'the dark side of community', 2002, 66) imposes a rigid classification, so that an individual's own sense of identity is consumed – completely defined – by the group. In danger of being lost here is not only the individual's sense of himself *as* an individual (an accusation historically leveled against Communist and other strongly socialist forms of government), but his sense of himself as a member of various other groups at the same time. Our freedom in a democratic society is marked by, among other things, our freedom of association. I may see myself as a Jew, but also as a university academic, a singer, an Australian citizen, an eldest son, etc. Even if some of our group memberships are compulsory or involuntary, others are not. To insist that one such association is overriding or exclusive, is to commit what Amartya Sen calls the "Fallacy of Singular Affiliation" which can be seen as lying at the heart of much of the intolerance and discord to which we bear witness around the world today (Sen 2006, 20 ff.).

The Fallacy of Singular Affiliation afflicts especially the "large" groupings of nationality (citizenship), culture, race, religion, etc. This is because their "largeness" consists, not merely in their size, but in the extent of their claims on our allegiances and life-stories. Where a "small" collective like a book club is (usually) just that – a group of individuals with a common (literary) purpose – membership of a particular nationality, religion or culture carries with it, and is sustained by, a considerable amount of "baggage", some of it morally innocuous, but some not. To be a member of that nation, religion or culture is, necessarily, to share the load of that baggage which – as recent instances have underscored – can impose contentious, even dangerous, impositions on its members.³

Given the types of issues and problems with which the social sciences are concerned – including equality, culture, exclusion, discrimination, etc. – it is not surprising that the literature has focused on groups or collectives, rather than individuals. In so doing, however, some writers have equivocated on the concept of identity, claiming to be addressing the issue of individual ("token") identity, but actually sliding back to the level of collective ("type") identity. Isin and Wood take up the challenge of reconciling the concepts of citizenship and identity, stating (correctly)

that "while citizenship has been associated with the universal, identity is associated with the particular." (Isin, Wood 1999, 14). Later, they assert that:

'Identity' is a concept that presupposes a dialogical recognition of the other; it is a relational concept. But it is also a concept that presupposes identification in the sense that individuals recognize attributes or properties in each other that are construed as identical or at least similar. These properties, then, are used as an index of individual position and disposition. Identity is therefore a concept not so much of uniqueness or distinction as of resemblance and repetition (1999, 19).

However, in shifting the focus from distinctness to resemblance, they thereby move irrevocably in the direction of the universal, away from the particular – despite their claims to the contrary. As I have already emphasized, the criteria grounding judgments relating to identity necessarily include both resemblance *and* distinctness. As long as we restrict considerations of identity to what binds individuals together (and, thereby, to what makes them different from other individuals who are not part of the group) we are referring to the identity of the group, not to that of its actual members.

For another example, consider the following comments from Stuart Hall, who traces the concept of identity from the "individualist" subject of the Enlightenment; through the "sociological" subject, where "identity is formed in the 'interaction' between self and society", to:

...the post-modern subject, conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us...the subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self' (Hall 1992, 277).

Notwithstanding Hall's plausible analysis of these three conceptions of identity he, too, equivocates on the identity question, as evidenced by his acknowledgment that the fragmentation, displacement and pluralization characteristic of post-modernist thinking, threatens to destroy the individual subject and its identity. I concede that the project of aligning myself with various groups and collectives has become muddled by the reality that *their* identities are no longer fixed or determinate; but this no more destroys my own identity than the empirical fact that each of us changes over time, in ways that may make the actual task of re-identification extremely difficult; witness the familiar example of asking one's friends to "find me" in an old school photograph. Changes notwithstanding, it is still *me*, then and now. Indeed, the very concept of qualitative change makes sense

3 "In some ways, terrorism is an outgrowth of collectivism taken to its extreme. For collectivist-oriented individuals, the group (e.g., family, nation, religion) takes precedence over the individual,... The terrorist becomes fused with the group he represents, so much so that he is willing to sacrifice his own life to advance the group's agenda and purposes." Schwartz 2005, 304.



only on the assumption that the entity which changes remains numerically identical.

Elsewhere Hall expresses a preference for the concept of *identification* over *identity*:

In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. (Hall 1996, 2).⁴

Once again, however, in so far as identification is a relation of alignment rather than distinction – we identify *with* something or someone – it cannot capture the full conditions of identity that apply to individual persons.

I am claiming that collectivist concepts – including *citizenship* – whose extensions are grouped together by virtue of shared properties, do not generate adequate identity criteria for their (individual) members (i.e. persons). In certain contexts, it may well be of some importance that I am an official, an adult, a male, a considerate person, an Australian citizen, etc. Still, in *almost* all such cases, I could (both conceptually and empirically) and often do, survive the loss of the kind in question. It is still I who matured from infancy to adulthood, is transformed from a bully to a nurturer, who gives up citizenship of one country to become a citizen of another (or takes up *dual* citizenship), etc.

Notice the qualification "almost" here. In contrast to the classifications just listed, there are some properties which, necessarily, belong to me, in the sense that I could not exist without them. And among these, there is one which determines the *conditions* of my identity. It is not particularly controversial to suggest that my belonging to the class of human persons – or, more straightforwardly, my *being a person* – is what determines these conditions.

Western philosophy has generated a plethora of theories tying the property of being a person with appropriate criteria of identity. Such criteria ground our everyday judgments – "She is the same person as...", "He is a different person...", "That person no longer exists (because he has died)", "Aliens and higher primates

could be regarded as persons (albeit not *human persons*)" – as we track individuals through space and time. To claim that being a person is associated with specific identity criteria is tantamount to declaring that *person* is the appropriate kind or concept for objects which fall under it (i.e. individual persons). This means, *inter alia*, that the very existence of a person depends on the applicability of these criteria. So, on the one hand, if the criteria fail, then the person ceases to be a person and, *thereby*, ceases to be, *period*. On the other hand, as long as the criteria succeed in identifying and re-identifying a specific person (through space and time), then that person retains his identity *in the face of all other changes* (recall the school photo example).⁵

2. Citizenship is central to who we (collectively) are in a socio-political sense

This assertion, interpreted empirically, is hard to deny (subject to who the "we" are). Governments of many different persuasions clearly have a stake here (for purposes of collecting revenue through taxation, if nothing else), but if we broaden our perspective to include education (remembering that, by and large, governments also determine the shape of educational policy and practice), we face the familiar issue of how to evaluate the appropriateness of government and social determinations in regard to children and others whose voices carry little, if any, weight. Moreover, we see, once again, the shift from defining (the identity of) a collective, such as a nation or a people, to identifying essential characteristics of the individual members of that collective. Accordingly, the question to consider here is: "How important is an individual's citizenship (status) to her/his well-being, as judged either by that person or by others?"

The main difficulty with this question is that it is not merely empirical – and, therefore, highly contextual – but psychological and, hence, largely subjective. Where one person may judge that his citizenship plays a vital role in his life, another may simply deny this (by focusing on a broader, more cosmopolitan ideal, or on other affiliations and associations which matter more to him). Thus far, then, there is little to justify giving a central place to this concept within an educational framework. Further, even those for whom citizenship genuinely matters need to concede certain difficulties. After all, such concepts as *citizenship*, *religion*, *culture*, and *ethnicity* serve to divide as much as to unite – if only in political and legal terms (but usually in moral and affective terms as well; citizens are exhorted to

4 Hall goes on to posit identification as an ongoing "construction, a process never completed". I prefer to characterize this project in terms of a shifting or evolving set of identifications and differences but – for reasons which I have tried to make clear – my actual continuing identity is not in question. Hall, in a review of Postmodernist perspectives on persons – specifically, on the challenge of bridging our social and psychological conceptions of the self – remarks on the influence of Paul Hirst's critique, which is essentially a charge of *question-begging* (Hall 1996, 7): the construction of the self within and through discourse assumes that the self is already constituted as subject. My argument, based primarily on semantic considerations, is along similar lines.

5 See also Hall 1996, where he reiterates his rejection of any kind of *essentialist* conception of identity. The view that I am defending could be described as essentialist in the sense that *being a human person* is the essential property that allows us to track individual persons through space and time.



feel a sense of pride and loyalty to their particular nation or state, which often, albeit not inevitably, leads to feelings of superiority over, and disdain for, others who are members of different nations). It is hard to see the merit of attempting to identify in terms of a divisive classification, particularly when it comes to seeing ourselves as *moral agents*. I shall return to this point.⁶ In response, some writers have distinguished between various forms of nationalism and patriotism (for example, Kennedy 2009, 7), but the fact remains that in socio-political terms, nation-states and their leaders have proven both willing and able to exploit the natural inclination to "belong" for their own self-centred interests.

3. Citizenship education is the proper home for teaching values (including moral, political and social values)

It is this claim, perhaps about all others, that is used to justify citizenship and civics education, in their various forms in the curriculum. One way of refuting it is to come up with a superior framework for teaching values, one which does not rely on – or, at least, subsumes – conceptions of citizenship. I have hinted that such a framework can adequately be provided by the concept of *person*. I shall now elaborate on this position.

The major political movements over the past four hundred years (since the Enlightenment and the rise of Modernism) – ranging from extreme liberalism or individualism to extreme communitarianism or collectivism – are associated with corresponding views about how both individual persons and nation-states relate to, and function in, the broader socio-political framework. Locating the individual person somewhere along this range does not, I suggest, capture what is most important about personhood. An alternative model identifies *personhood* as an irreducibly *relational* construct. In this model, the idea that each of us exists in, and through, our relations with other persons, is at the very heart of our understanding of what being a person means. This idea has been articulated by writers and theorists in several disciplines and coming from several distinct perspectives. It is a recurring theme in the pragmatists C. S. Peirce, G. H. Mead and, of course, John Dewey; no less so in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas and Hans-Georg Gadamer; and again, in the theoretical and applied research of Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner (where the

skills and tools of thought are seen in terms of internalized social and linguistic behavior). Among contemporary philosophers, Taylor is a prominent proponent of the view that human life has a fundamentally dialogical – hence, relational – character in virtue of the status of human persons as, essentially, *reason-making* creatures (Taylor 1991, 33). In Taylor (who duly acknowledges the work of Bakhtin on our "inner dialogicality", Taylor 1991, 127), we find a line of thought which offers a genuine alternative to the familiar dichotomy of the subjective or monological view of the self *versus* some kind of externalized or objectified conception).⁷

Interpersonal relationships may be identified at all points on the spectrum from individual to universal. From the intimate perspective of Buber's "I-Thou", to the broadest conception of global citizenship, the key construct remains the idea of persons in relationship with one another.⁸ Constructing appropriate identity criteria for personhood may be seen as part of the broader project of "finding/conceptualizing oneself" which, when viewed relationally, involves the ongoing task of positioning myself as *one among others*.⁹

It may be that the post-modernist metaphors of fragmentation and incompleteness apply to such entities as cultures, nations, ethnicities, and so on. But I interpret this as a challenge to those who maintain that these collectivist notions remain viable, in both semantic and practical terms. On the point of viability, I remain open-minded. My concern is with the individuals who are thus collected and classified; *their* viability is guaranteed by the simple fact of their persistence through space and time, according to whichever criteria of identity are judged to be adequate to the task.

In the following sections of the paper, I point out some implications of this conceptualization of personhood for moral and citizenship education. Regarding the relational concept of a person as the appropriate locus for ethical behavior relieves the concept of *citizenship* of a prescriptive burden for which it is ill-suited.

6 Martha Nussbaum (1996, 5) notes that "at bottom, nationalism and ethnocentric particularism are not alien to one another – but akin". Nussbaum 1996: 5. One writer who appreciates the distinction between citizenship – as it applies to persons – and national identity is Jürgen Habermas who points out that freedom in the name of national independence is quite different from the freedom enjoyed (or not) by citizens within a nation: "Citizenship was never conceptually tied to national identity." (Habermas 1994, 23).

7 Where Cheng *et al* view the relational construction of personhood as challenging the notion of personal identity, I see them as entirely consistent. Cheng *et al* 2006, 4.

8 Buber 1971.

9 The relational conception I am defending places the *person* at the center of the "Who am I?" debate, thereby distinguishing it from the universalist view called "Cosmopolitanism", as espoused by Nussbaum and others (Nussbaum *et al* 1996). As sympathetic critics have pointed out, Nussbaum's case against nationalism and patriotism can be restated without recourse to any such universalist commitments. For example, Putnam, replying to Nussbaum, says: "That someone is a fellow being [person], a fellow passenger to the grave, has moral weight for me; 'citizen of the world does not.'" (Nussbaum *et al* 1996, 95). I agree also with Gutman, who points out that such phrases as "the community of human beings in the entire world" and "citizens of the world" reflect "another parochial form of nationalism, albeit on a global scale." (Nussbaum *et al* 1996, 70). I view the more contemporary term "global citizenship" in the same light.



4. Persons, citizens and morality

It seems reasonable to take, as a starting point, the idea that morality comes into play because we persons are both *social* and *reflective* creatures: continually interacting with one another, and with the capacity – hence, the obligation – to think about our behavior in *prescriptive*, as well as descriptive, terms. Further, assuming a relational conception of personhood necessitates the construction of an ethical framework whose most basic prescriptions apply to all, and only, persons in the context of their relationships with one another.

In so far as it is persons who are obliged to act morally, it is also persons whose interests and concerns ought to be taken most seriously in ethical judgment and decision making. This by no means excludes our moral obligations to non persons but it does imply a "pecking" order. Killing a child is universally, and appropriately, regarded as being more serious than killing a rabbit. Further – and this point is especially pertinent – it implies that persons – *qua* those individuals like you and me, who live (and die) according to the usual patterns of nature and circumstance – are more important, ethically speaking, than any and all collectives with which they may be associated. I am not proposing that when faced with a choice between killing one person and killing an entire group, we should opt for the latter, but this is because such a group is constituted simply of individuals who are each persons in their own right. My target here is the "large" group or collective, considered in more abstract or institutional terms. Consider the following examples:

"Gay marriage would destroy the sanctity of the Family"

"The State is more important than the individuals in it"

"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country!"

"That's not the way we do things in this family/culture/society".

In each of these examples, the rights and well-being of one or more actual persons are subjugated to those of the broader collective, where the latter is construed as having moral value *above and beyond* any properties of its actual members (the whole is greater than the sum of its parts). In critiquing such instances, my point is not to resurrect some version of crude Individualism over an equally crude Collectivism; rather, it is to question the propriety of elevating the collective, as an entity in its own right, over those individuals

who, at any given time, are members of it.¹⁰ It also calls attention to the power of collectives to impose their own "baggage" on their members, in so far as they view themselves as being greater than the sums of their constituent parts.

I maintain that *citizenship* has little, if anything, to contribute to conceptions of morality and moral education that is not already covered by reference to persons who, after all, are the key players in moral transactions.

I do not question the right of a state, nation, society or religion to articulate and implement the kind of education – including moral education – that it deems appropriate (although I have strong views about what form this should take if it is worthy of being called "education"). After all, most governments take their commitment to education seriously.¹¹ However, from the premise that moral education is provided by the state, it does not follow that the state is justified in inserting itself as a specific beneficiary or even a stake-holder when it comes to the moral commitments of its citizens. This would be akin to a teacher of ethics insisting that her students hold her in special regard, morally speaking, simply because of her role as teacher.

One commentator who has taken a more nuanced stance on the relationship between citizenship and morality is J. Mark Halstead. He has proposed several models of what citizenship education might look like, within a broadly Liberal moral and political framework, but rejects the thesis – which, he sees as gaining ground in the UK – that citizenship education, properly construed, would make moral education redundant (Halstead, Pike 2006; Halstead 2006; I refer to this henceforth as the "redundancy thesis"). I agree with his conclusion here, but would go further and suggest that moral education, when properly conceived and implemented, challenges the idea that citizenship education "adds value" to this conception.

Halstead proposes three models of citizenship education, whose key aims may be summarized as follows: (1) to produce informed citizens (Halstead, Pike 2006, 34), specifically citizens (i.e. adult persons who

¹⁰ I leave aside the question of whether these claims actually make sense! The third example, famously proclaimed by John F. Kennedy in January, 1961, reflects a noble sentiment which might better be expressed as "Ask not what your country can do for you *personally*; ask what *we can do together*". I endorse the value of "the common good", as long as this term refers to the goods held in common by individuals, rather than the goods allegedly held by some collective which exists in abstraction from individuals.

¹¹ This commitment is somewhat blurred with the growth of private and home schooling. Such non-public institutions often impose or reflect moral viewpoints that are at odds with those advocated by the state. See Sen 2006, 117. But then, they are also representative of those "large groupings" toward which I have expressed concern earlier in the paper.



are part of the nation in question) who are knowledgeable *about* citizenship (Halstead 2006, 203); (2) to socialize students into the dominant values of the society, with an emphasis on obedience, commitment, patriotism and authority; this is also called "Education for *good* citizenship" (2006, 204, emphasis added); (3) "to prepare children for active participation in the political, civil and social life of the community"; also called "Education for *active* citizenship" (2006, 206, emphasis added). Halstead claims, first, that while (1) is basically descriptive, (2) and (3) are clearly prescriptive; and secondly, that while (3) has a strong critical component – reflecting the value of autonomy in Liberal society – (2) deliberately presents values and issues as uncontroversial because it values conformity and passivity over autonomy.¹²

In the context of the question which forms the title of his 2006 paper ("Does citizenship education make moral education redundant?"), Halstead favours (3) over the other two models – which is to be expected given his preference for a liberal democratic value scheme (Halstead, Pike 2006, Ch. 2). I endorse his preference, not because of anything specific to citizenship education, but because *every* subject should be taught in a critical and reflective spirit, encouraging students to question what is presented to them. It is a cliché that nothing in education (or schooling) is value-free. Every subject that is taught – or not taught – carries prescriptive baggage which is more often implicit than explicit. The muddled idea of "moral neutrality", while pretending to offer protection to vulnerable youngsters, actually threatens to impose on them – if only by default – the moral agenda of the dominant *status quo* and other interest groups. Accordingly, one key goal of moral education must be to provide students with the wherewithal to "sniff out" and reflectively critique such agendas whenever and wherever they occur. In so far as citizenship education does embrace or reflect certain values these, too, along with other aspects of civic "knowledge", should be open to question.

In rejecting the redundancy thesis, Halstead maintains that citizenship education is, and should be treated as, a separate domain from moral education. He holds that a proper conceptual framework for citizenship will include values that are not moral values but, rather, political, civic, economic and legal values. In particular, given his commitment to a liberal socio-economic framework, he proposes three core liberal values, viz. *freedom, equality and rationality*, where the third-

mentioned acts as a normative safeguard between the first two, which are often in conflict (Halstead, Pike 2006, 28). What are we to make of these claims?

Much depends here on an appropriate understanding of *values*, for they will be key substantive components in citizenship education, over and above civic knowledge (which is intended to be largely factual in nature). Halstead offers the following characterisation:

Values are principles and fundamental convictions which act as justifications for activity in the public domain and as general guides to private behavior; they are enduring beliefs about what is worthwhile, ideals for which people strive and broad standards by which particular practices are judged to be good, right, desirable or worthy of respect. (Halstead, Pike 2006, 24).

There is much to like about this definition, particularly its focus on values as ideals and standards (criteria) for making good judgments.¹³ Still, whether or not we classify *freedom and equality*, (along with other values such as *democracy, pluralism, etc.,...*), as underpinning citizenship, they are, surely, *moral* values. From Halstead's discussion of these values, it is clear that they can be justified in terms of their contribution to *personal and interpersonal well-being*. Democracy, for example, "is seen by liberals as the most rational safeguard against tyranny and the best way of guaranteeing the equal right of citizens to determine for themselves what is in their own best interests." (Halstead, Pike 2006, 29). I grant that the concept of democracy might best be accommodated in a course on civics, or politics, etc.; my point is that as a value, it is justified, ultimately, in *moral* terms.

Why, then, do Halstead and other writers on citizenship education persist in the view that there are values which are tied to citizenship (perhaps via politics or the law) rather than morality? The answer, I suggest, lies in the so-called distinction between *private* and *public* values, the idea being that whereas the former belong to the sphere of (personal) morality – and are, thereby, subjective and contestable – the latter are the common (shared) threads that hold a citizenry together – and, accordingly, must be relatively objective and uncontroversial (Halstead, Pike 2006, 37; Halstead 2006, 207; also McLaughlin 1992). However, even noting Halstead's own reservations about the private/public distinction, I maintain that on a relational view of personhood, this dualism, like many others, does not stand up to scrutiny.¹⁴

12 McLaughlin 1992 sees (1), (2) and (3) in terms of a continuum, ranging from "minimal" to "maximal" conceptions of citizenship. He criticizes British Government policy of the day – and, one can imagine, of today as well – for working with and promoting a muddled conception of citizenship, one whose educational implications in terms of such components as morality and critical thinking are quite unclear.

13 Not all values "act as justifications for activity", but we can agree that ethical ones do.

14 I agree with Kiwan who questions the link between citizenship and values on the grounds that "Human rights are rights of an individual, underpinned by common values for *all* human beings [read: human persons], rather than rights inherently based on or derived from being a member of a political community or nation-state." Kiwan 2008, 55.



I am sympathetic to Halstead's project of locating values between the extremes of subjectivism and objectivism (Halstead, Pike 2006, 25). But I would go further and assert that values, like concepts generally, occupy the middle ground which prevents these extremes from gaining purchase in the first place. To take as given the distinction between subjectivist (purely private) and objectivist (public) domains (as in both the Cartesian and classical Empiricist traditions) is to court semantic and epistemological disaster. On the one hand, the private realm of the subjective must necessarily be separate for each individual thinker; indeed, it could, at best, be known only in the first person, thereby rendering shared communication and interpretation intrinsically impossible. In short, if we begin with "private" knowledge, we will never move beyond it.¹⁵ On the other hand, the idea that values are *given* objectively, i.e. as objects independently of our own perceptions and conceptions, leads to the exclusion of any individual interpretation or construction, and to wondering how it is possible for values to be internalized, on the one hand, or challenged, on the other. Elsewhere, I have argued that the key concepts of *inquiry* and *judgment* are also to be located between these same extremes, and for the same reason, viz. to remind us that the subjective and objective realms of experience are conceptually interwoven (Splitter 2010). It is in this context that I question the viability of the private-public distinction.

Somewhat ironically, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that in China – and, perhaps, Confucian-based societies generally – the private-public discussion is also downplayed, no more so than in the context of moral and civics education. If the State – a "large" group if ever there were one! – is *the* crucial determinant of identity (a claim which I have rejected), then in a very real sense, *all* is public and, following the same line of reasoning as revealed above, uncontroversial. While official government policy is not easily accessible (state secrecy being a by-product of non-democratic systems), it becomes clear listening to educators from Mainland China that the notion of a private morality – like that of a private citizen – is a non-starter. So far so good, one might think, except for the rider that since key moral values and principles are uncontroversial, they can be both taught and mandated as such.

15 Many philosophers have been critical of both classical dualism and empiricism. See, for example, Wittgenstein's argument against the idea of a "private language", Wittgenstein 1968, §§243ff. My thinking here follows P. F. Strawson, in his celebrated account of the concept of *person* as *primitive* with respect to, and preempting any conceptual gap between, mind and body. Strawson 1959, Ch. 3. I note also that Donald Davidson pursued a line of reasoning about agency and truth that culminated in his rejection of subjectivity as an ontological category. See Davidson 1982, 1991, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2001.

The idea that being a person should be understood relationally, i.e. in terms of how individual persons relate to one another, implies that the various properties associated with personhood are also understood as applying equally to myself and to other persons. As noted above, the possibility of moral judgment depends upon this relationship and, hence, on all interpersonal relationships.¹⁶ Such a relational conception leaves no room for either the "private morality/public citizenship" mentality of (some) Western thinkers, or the "all is public and predetermined" stereotype of the Chinese system.

Allow me to reflect briefly on the British experience, in response to perceptions of a decline in moral standards and political awareness on the part of young people and, more specifically, to the tragic events on the London Underground, in July 2005.¹⁷ Whereas the events on the East coast of the USA on September 11, 2001, led – politically, at least – to the development of an "Us (Americans)-and-Them (anyone who disagrees with us)" mentality, those in Britain exacerbated a more introspective response that was already under-way; namely, to seek to unite what had become a pluralistic or multi-cultural society around a core set of values that captured or represented the idea of "Britishness" (Kiwan 2008; Taylor 2006). But this idea is confused at best and dangerous at worst. It could succeed only at the cost of perpetuating a toxic "us-and-them" mentality; even *within* British society, emphasis on some core set of shared values would result in either a largely innocuous set of findings ("Britons value peace and fairness", etc.) or a growing sense of exclusion on the part of those British citizens who happened not to share those values.

16 Habermas may plausibly be interpreted along similar lines. In focusing attention on the role of citizens (of whatever nation) as contributing to an "intersubjectively shared praxis", he looked forward to a "European Community" which respects democratic and other citizen-related rights, unencumbered by historical national boundaries. His idea of "deliberative democracy" is akin to that of the "community of inquiry", in so far as the latter can be imagined at a broad social level. Habermas 1994, 24 ff.

17 See Kiwan 2008 for a comprehensive review of citizenship education in the UK, where this topic has been much debated over the past twenty years. The tensions wrought by cultural and other large-scale divisions are often exacerbated by the tabloid media. Headlines like "Are they British or Muslim?" referring to the young men behind the London subway bombings, assume that a person cannot be both or, at least, that even if he is both, one must take priority over the other. This is an example of Sen's Fallacy of Singular Affiliation. Further, I suggest that while such questions appear to reflect a concern for *individual* identity, they actually are grounded in a concern for *the identity of the collective(s)* in question. The real issue behind the "British or Muslim" question above is not the interests or identities of British citizens or Muslims; rather, it is the interests and identity of *Britain* or *Islam* as national and religious institutions, respectively.



We do not need the heavy and potentially divisive language of patriotism, nationalism and citizenship, to identify and urge the appropriate moral point. The tragedy of July 2005 was *not* that a group of British Muslims wrought havoc in Britain and on the lives of other British citizens, but that *a group of human persons murdered another group of human persons*. In the same vein, the appropriate educational and moral response should focus on how it is possible for people to behave in this way toward other people (and, in turn, how to prevent such behavior), rather than on the implications of being confused about one's own "identity", in nationalistic and religious/ethnic terms.

5. Values and citizenship in the classroom

In rejecting the private/public distinction, we might focus more directly on the merits of a values framework which is grounded on inter-personal relationships, both of the intimate and more global varieties. On this point, I have argued that a form of *Constructivism*, suitably interpreted, has much to offer (Splitter 2009). Values, like concepts, and unlike biases, prejudices and other belief-forms, are constructed according to the norms and standards of *collaborative inquiry*. Referring back to the definition offered by Halstead and Pike, the key theme of (moral) values being beliefs and ideals about what *is judged* to be good, right, and desirable, begs the question of *who* is doing the judging and whether or not they are skilled in judgment-formation. In their chapter entitled "How children learn values", the authors emphasize the role of "critical reflection and discussion" in values formation and application (Halstead, Pike 2006, 148), albeit as one strategy among others. The transformation of classrooms into collaborative thinking environments is an invitation to young people to take an active role in their own values education.¹⁸

Adopting terminology based on the work of Dewey, Mead, Vygostky, Lipman and others, such collaborative thinking environments may be called *communities of inquiry* ("CoI").¹⁹ Participating in a CoI allows students, individually and collaboratively, to develop their own ideas and perspectives based on appropriately rigorous modes of thinking *and* against the

background of a thorough understanding and appreciation of those ideas and perspectives that, having stood the test of time, may be represented as society's best view of things to date. In a CoI, learning is transformed into thinking (or, better, inquiry), and knowledge into understanding and good judgment. Students are encouraged to work out for what they stand, to what they are committed, and what *they* judge to be worthwhile, but always in a fallibilistic spirit ("This is what I believe/value – and I can tell you why – but I might be wrong."). They learn to work with the tension that comes with disagreement, precisely because they do not see their beliefs and values as bound up with their own identities.

I concede that among the things for which many ordinary persons stand, to which they are committed, and which they judge to be worthwhile, their affiliations with, and memberships of, associations of one sort or another – whether voluntary or not – are bound to be prominent. My nation, my religion, my language, my culture (*qua* "large group" affiliations) may well feature here, along with a range of other ("small group") connections such as (to) my family, my friends, my class or school; as well as my values, core beliefs and convictions. Granted, these affiliations and connections are elaborations on the kind of person I am, but – remembering the person in the school photo – *they presuppose, rather than constitute, my continuing identity*. The relevant distinction here is between self-determination – concerning the *kind* of person I am or want to be – and (numerical) identity – concerning the very person that I am. Awareness of this distinction is, itself, a form of empowerment, even for young children: specific pathologies (such as schizophrenia) aside, the underlying thread of my own existence in space and time can be seen as inviolable.

This process of elaboration includes but is not restricted to the moral domain, although that domain is central to it. To regard myself as a member of an inquiring community is to see myself as *one among others* which, in turn, has three key components which are both cognitive and affective: understanding and appreciating my own self-worth and place in the community; understanding and appreciating that others are striving for the very same kind of self-appreciation; and understanding and appreciating that self-appreciation and appreciation for others are interdependent and mutually reinforcing (hence, the "Golden Rule", versions of which are found in just about every moral code and tradition known to humanity).

The CoI is an interactive environment whose entire rationale is the well-being of its members (in intellectual, moral, and affective terms). This means, first, that issues of concern – including those affiliations and connections referred to in the previous paragraph – should be treated as open to collaborative inquiry and decision-making; and secondly, that

18 I reject what I call the "heirloom" view of values, according to which values are precious, fragile objects handed down from generation to generation, with a stern admonition not to examine them too carefully lest they fall apart. Such an ossified, inert conception of values is both popular in the public mind and worthless in educational terms.

19 The community of inquiry is one type of *community of practice* (Wenger 1998), but as a normative or prescriptive construct, it guarantees that the practice in question is worthwhile and not destructive or toxic. The CoI has been most fully developed in the literature and practice of *Philosophy for Children*. See Lipman et al 1980, Splitter, Sharp 1995, Lipman 2003, Splitter 2007, 2009, 2010. For an insightful historical discussion of this concept, see Seixas 1993.



the community itself has no agenda over and above that of the well-being its members. As a network of interpersonal relationships, it is the very paradigm of a "small" group or, as I like to put it, *no larger than the sum of its parts* (Splitter 2007, 2009, 2010). There is no inherent value or worth in the CoI, as a collective, beyond that of its members. It serves as a vital means to an end, and that end is the personal development of those members.

The contrast with our respective national, religious, and cultural affiliations is stark, for these groups are seen as worth preserving *in their own right* – as being, in other words, greater than the sums of their parts – hence the potential for tension and conflict as each of them vies for our allegiance. It is this sense of allegiance to something larger than any and all of us that threatens the possibility of seeing oneself simply as one among others. Conversely, the CoI acts as a safeguard against manipulation and indoctrination – which is why it is an appropriate environment for moral education – precisely because it is regulated by the normative ideal of thinking critically and carefully about matters of importance.²⁰

Arguments for and against including specific subjects in the school curriculum may now proceed on the assumption that whatever is taught will be viewed, by students and teachers alike, as *forms of inquiry*, to be judged and assessed, ultimately, by criteria deemed to be appropriate in that context. I see no reason why various forms of civics, citizenship, and cosmopolitan education could not be included here as legitimate areas of inquiry, alongside language, literature, mathematics, etc. But the members of a community of inquiry must be vigilant to ensure that none of these disciplines threatens their own (personal) identity, although they may well af-

fect and shape their judgments of what they regard as important. It is hard to see how knowledge – including knowledge about one's country, political system, etc. – genuinely sought and gained, could pose such a threat, but where citizenship education extends to instilling such affective responses as patriotism and nationalism, teachers and students reserve the right to challenge or reject such responses, just as they do in response to an insistence on a particular religious or tribal affiliation.

In terms of actual school and classroom practice, there are several important implications. First, if citizenship is to remain a viable construct in educational terms, students from an early age should be encouraged to regard themselves as citizens *here and now*, and not merely as "future citizens in training". Secondly, this intrinsic sense of citizenship by no means rules out the idea that schooling should (help) prepare them to be well-informed, more active and critically reflective citizens of society-at-large. Indeed, to borrow a phrase from Leung and Yuen, the school and classroom might be seen as *crucibles for democracy* (Leung, Yuen 2009), in which genuine deliberation on real issues leads to decision-making and action. Thirdly, however, in a classroom CoI, to be, or to become, a citizen is to be, or to become, a person, in the sense defended in this paper; that is, an individual who is working out their path in life by engaging, critically and empathetically, with others who are doing likewise. It is *not* about instilling a misguided sense of loyalty or commitment to the classroom or school as an entity in its own right. Finally, those in charge of running schools and classrooms must think carefully about the full extent of any commitment to transform them into inquiring communities. It is dishonest to the point of hypocrisy for those in power to "allow" young people to think for themselves and form their own judgments in some areas but not others. Non-negotiability is corrosive to inquiry, whether the context be the formal school curriculum or beyond it. Students cannot engage in critical reflection under the constraint that some, at least, of what they choose to think about – for example, so-called key public values – is not really open to question and must, ultimately, be accepted as the price of belonging to one's society. As C.S Peirce and others committed to the ideals of collaborative inquiry stressed, *the path to genuine inquiry should not be blocked*. Pre-empted conclusions or, worse, "taboo" topics, block the process of inquiry and should be avoided.²¹

20 This normative ideal is crucial. Without it, pluralistic and multi-cultural societies face irresolvable difficulties in accommodating moral and cultural traditions which are simply incompatible – either with one another or with the prevailing state or government framework. Teaching children to think for themselves will amount to little if it is not part of the culture of every educational institution. A similar point is made, in no uncertain terms, by Sen, in his critique of governments and societies that encourage the formation of narrowly-sectarian school communities in the name of cultural pluralism (2006, 117). Sen is critical of the agendas of such communities, which are likely to be inimical to open, structured inquiry and the skills and dispositions associated with it. Although he does not refer specifically to classroom dynamics, he emphasizes the importance of teaching children how to reason and make good choices, decisions and judgments. The better option is right before our eyes – at least for those living in large urban centers: it is the institution of *public schooling* which, inevitably, brings together just the kinds of diversity that are needed for genuine inquiry. With a multitude of nations, cultures, religions and other categories right there in the classroom, teachers have a wonderful opportunity to apply the principle that we find out who we truly are through being one among others.

21 Leung and Yuen 2009 cite a study in which students at a Hong Kong secondary school were encouraged to negotiate many issues, including their own style of school uniform, within a context in which such actions as "Changing natural colour of the hair" were simply ruled as unacceptable!



6. Concluding comment

To see ourselves as persons in the world is to see ourselves in an ever-changing network of inter-personal relationships. It has become increasingly important to expand this network beyond local and national boundaries, to embrace a more cosmopolitan ideal. Whatever perspective we opt for, we all must learn strategies for dealing with the tensions that inevitably arise. As reflective persons, our informed choices in this regard must be taken seriously by our governments as well as by our teachers. For reasons which I have attempted to articulate, I am not convinced that notions of citizenship have much place in these networks and perspectives; we may hope, at least, that they are not taken for granted.

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